

ions. They are always dangerous in the extreme.

Do you say that we have overseers or elders whose business it is to "take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock?" We have a few overseers it is true; but all we have are laborers "in the word and teaching," preachers, as the people call them. Those who are not preachers are found entirely wanting. The difference between Gospel supervision and our polity is this: Gospel organization requires *elders*—more than one—in every church. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appointed elders in every city, as I gave thee charge." Titus 1:5. "The elders therefore among you I exhort." I Pet. 5:1. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church. Jas. 5:14. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. Acts 20:17. Instead of our congregations having elders, one elder is usually divided among two, three and sometimes four congregations. If it required at least two elders in the apostolic church to keep christianity at the proper standard what may we expect when we reverse divine wisdom and have two or three congregations under the oversight of *one* elder? Is it any wonder that there are twenty-five per cent of our congregations involved in trouble which renders them powerless? Is it any wonder that there are so many who for "filthy lucre" and other causes, "like grievous wolves, shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock?" "But," says one, "how can you ordain elders," when you have no one with the proper qualifications? The standard is so high that we have not material for one." Now, if that be true, something, indeed, is wrong. The fault is either ours or the Holy Spirit's. Did the Holy Spirit through the apostles require the impossible? Did not the divine mind understand his business? To urge the objection that there is no one with the proper qualifications in our congregations does not reflect very much credit on the teachers. If the apostles with their natural process of education and training could take the heathen and in the short space of a *few months* have him ready for the position of overseer ought we not in this century of intelligence educate and train persons so as to be suitable in five or ten years? If you can get no one in your congregation in the space of five years to have the proper qualifications for baptism whose fault is it? God's? We have no trouble to find deacons, and yet the moral qualifications of the elder are almost exactly the same. It would be strange, indeed, if the elder could not be

instructed in the duties that pertain to his calling so as to make him available in the space of a few years.

Our churches, with Gospel supervision would wield a greater influence and consequently do more good in one year than they do now in two. We all see that the standard is not high enough. That something needs adjusting.

The method we have taken in the past to meet the difficulties which have come before us is simply wonderful. The congregations which were suffering because of troubles could not meet the difficulties. They were not scripturally organized. They had two deacons it is true; but one of them got mad because brother A said he hadn't courage enough to eat a good meal before strangers; and the other deacon said he wasn't going to mix in with their trouble; that they might just fight it out. Instead of sending an evangelist in the congregation to properly organize them and to show them what to do we undertake to do the work for them by machinery. In Indiana we have been trying for five years to build a something to stop a couple naughty preachers. Days of discussion and voting were required to get the cogs and cranks adjusted. After so many years of agitation about one-fourth of the congregations have signed a something called a constitution and after the first turn of the wheels the product is examined and lo! the punishment is administered to the faithful instead of the unfaithful. A board of elders with a few minutes instruction by the proper authority would have fastended the unfaithful preacher so he could have harmed no one. This state organization has helped some to go on in their wild course when their congregations had them under discipline; and they never could have gotten out of their congregations without making wrongs right. May the time soon come when every human invention will be looked upon as a relic and we shall bring into full use the heavenly ordained means of extending the borders of Zion. We summarize this second division of apostolic labor as follows:

(1) Without a board of elders, vain disputings and brawls will be frequent, because the pastor can not do the overseeing, in detail, of three or four congregations.

(2) Without elders who do labor in word and doctrine the congregation will be without any one to direct her affairs at such times when she has no pastor. At such critical periods some one is sure to assume the leadership and nearly always to the detriment of the class.

(3) Without a board of elders to direct the congregation, ungodly preachers will

impose upon them because a vast majority of the members are not posted as to who is in good standing.

(4) With a board of elders the (congregation understanding their duty toward them) but little trouble will be experienced in the selection of a pastor. Let a board of the best men in a congregation stand up and say, "Brethren, after due consideration and prayer we have come to the conclusion that brother A will do us the most good and we recommend him for the coming year," and all those who love the cause will be willing to risk their decision.

(5) Without the elders the "unity of faith," or the peculiar doctrines taught by Christ and the apostles and maintained by our brethren can not be perpetuated. Conference, both State and National, may declare every time they meet what we believe; but in spite of that the preacher will go out and preach and practice just what he pleases, so long as the congregations don't object; but let the elders, the divinely appointed officers "to watch lest wolves enter in among you," go to this man and tell him that he "can't preach such doctrine as a member of our congregation" and knowing full well that he can not get a letter to go into any other, and that they will take the office as minister away from him if he don't stop, he will be brought to terms, very effectually. Why, some of these preachers have gone through these silencing machines with their constitutions, articles, by-laws, etc., *which we have made*, and have gone back to their congregations, as pastors, too, from whence they are looking down upon our crushing mill with the broadest smile, happy as a sunflower.

"But," says one, "our elders may not be posted and may not know how to oversee the flock, then what?" Of course, our elders will not know everything pertaining to the work, neither will they know how to go about many things which must be done. Right here is one of the weak points in our polity: men are ordained to office but never taught nor shown *how* to do their work. They are simply abandoned. Members of the congregation will complain because they don't do anything, when the pastors have never shown them how to go about their work. Many an officer who would have been a power for good has been so discouraged because of no one to help him that he has given up in despair. Of course, the elder will need help. This brings us to the third department of work in Gospel supervision—that of the evangelist.

Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders to meet him that he might teach them and caution them against fanatics who would rise from among them and draw away dis-